

[IN GOD'S IMAGE 26 – WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?]

I Want to start today with a little exercise. Let's make a list of all the titles the Bible uses to describe Jesus Christ. For example, the most obvious one is "Savior." What are some others?

- ◆ God, Son, Mighty King, Redeemer, Good Shepherd, Way, Truth, Life, Light of the World, Mediator, Atonement, High Priest, Prophet, Word, Healer, Revelator, Judge, Reconciler, Justifier, Counsellor, Creator.
- ◆ Most of us have a title that goes along with our job description, but usually it's only one title. Yet when we look at the list of titles used to describe Jesus Christ, that's quite a list.
- ◆ And behind each one of those titles comes a responsibility.

Over the last couple of sermons we focused on how committed God is to his children. Despite our resistance to his overtures of love, in an incredible act of self-humiliation, God willingly joins us in our humanity.

- ◆ The reason why He willingly joins us in our humanity, has a lot to do with these titles we just looked at.
- ◆ Because these titles describe the mission the Father set the Son to achieve during his sojourn on earth.
- ◆ And I think it's interesting that as I looked at the list of titles, one thing about those titles really struck me.
- ◆ How many of these titles carry a negative connotation? The only one I can identify is "Judge," all the others carry a positive connotation.
- ◆ That reveals a lot about God's attitude towards us yet it also reveals what distorted view humanity usually has of God.

Last time we saw the arrival of Jesus on this earth not as a conquering king, but rather as a helpless babe.

- ◆ Now we need to look a little more closely at this person, Jesus Christ.
- ◆ We will start with the apostle John's introduction of the "Word", a title of Jesus Christ.
- ◆ ***John 1:1-5 In the beginning was the Word,***
- ◆ From our time in the Old Testament, we learned the "Word," or "Spokesperson" or "Logos" was the title given to Moses and the prophets of God to bring God's personal word to the people.
- ◆ But here John introduces the One whom these prophets represented and now this Word in human form is speaking for Himself.
- ◆ We begin to understand why God gets angry with Aaron the high priest and Miriam when they try to assume this role for themselves.
- ◆ ***V.1 ...and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.***
- ◆ This raises a difficult question as "How can you be with someone and be Him at the same time"?
- ◆ This is the ongoing dilemma we humans face in trying to understand the Trinity.
- ◆ ***v2. He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made***
- ◆ Not only has He always existed, but he also bears the title of "Creator."
- ◆ And just as the Old Testament begins with a Creator moving to create man, now we see the Creator moving to create a new beginning for mankind.
- ◆ Interestingly, this word, "Word" used in verse one is the English translation for the Greek word "logos."
- ◆ The Greek philosopher, Plato contrasts the word "logos", representing the realm of reason, with the word, "alogon", representing the illogical and irrational world.
- ◆ By using this particular word, the apostle John harks back to the original creation where God is restoring order in the midst of disorder.
- ◆ This "Creator" who has just joined mankind is about to bring about a final and lasting rational order to the cosmos.
- ◆ ***V 4. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.***
- ◆ The life that exists in every human being, in every plant and animal on the planet came from the Life Giver.
- ◆ But here too is an indication of that remarkable gift which distinguishes man from the animal kingdom, "light," a possible reference to human consciousness.
- ◆ It is human consciousness in conjunction with the already mentioned "Word" or communication qualities that gives humans the capacity to experience relationships.
- ◆ But as we know this life of light was perverted by the darkness of sin and man fell from his original estate.
- ◆ However this is not the end of the story as the next verse attests.
- ◆ ***V 5. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.***

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- ◆ Not only is He the life giver, but he is also the source of light and He will not allow the darkness, the “alagon” that has descended on mankind to prevail indefinitely.

So these are the three resources that the Word or Logos brings with Him when he shows up as God in the flesh; the ability to create, the ability to give life, and the ability to bring light.

- ◆ By introducing these qualities of the Word, John is making the point that only God has these capabilities.
- ◆ Man cannot “create,” he cannot give “life,” and he most certainly isn’t a “light” bringer.
- ◆ The point John is making in these short verses is that everything that makes God who He is, everything that makes God, God, the Word possesses.
- ◆ And the Gospel message is about how the Word uses these three resources to bring about the restoration of humanity.

And amazingly this God who in the past was way off in heaven now chooses to join us in our sinful state.

- ◆ ***V.14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.***
- ◆ The word used here, “dwelling,” is the word “tabernacle.”
- ◆ In the past God “tabernacled” with Israel at a distance, in the tent of the meeting.
- ◆ Now God through the Word comes and “tabernacles” amongst us.
- ◆ ***V.14 We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.***
- ◆ Peter, James and John witnessed Jesus in His glory at the transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-6).
- ◆ There is only one Son in the sense of being God; we become sons only by adoption.
- ◆ And notice the motivation of the Godhead in sending Jesus to us. He is not “full of judgment and damnation,” but rather “full of grace and truth.”
- ◆ What Jesus does is entirely an act of grace on behalf of mankind.

But by revealing Jesus as the Son, John introduces another interesting concept of who God is.

- ◆ As mentioned earlier, there is very little use of the title Father in the Old Testament as it is only used 15 times.
- ◆ In contrast, it is used more than 100 times in the Gospel of John alone.
- ◆ The use of this terminology by John to describe the relationship between Jesus and the Father demonstrated the Trinity was relational – for all eternity, there has been the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit interacting in community.
- ◆ The God Jesus came to reveal was much different from the distant God of the Old Testament.
- ◆ There the high priest only approached God once a year on the Day of Atonement and then it was only with great trepidation.
- ◆ He used to go into the Holy of Holies with a bell and a rope attached to his leg so if something happened to him in there and the bell stopped ringing, he could be pulled out with the rope.
- ◆ But now we see God taking the initiative and making a face-to-face approach to humanity.

In one of our earlier sermons we mentioned how God the Father is the wellspring or the source of living waters that constantly flows out from Him.

- ◆ This water is an analogy for God’s love and as the book of Revelation tells us, these living waters flow out to heal the nations (Revelation 22:2).
- ◆ Now in the incarnation of the Son we see this flow of love being extended to embrace mankind so we too can participate in this loving relationship that exists within the Godhead itself.
- ◆ This is precisely what Paul was speaking about in Philippians 2.
- ◆ ***Philippians 2:6-7 (NRSV) Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, 7 but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.***
- ◆ So now in the true nature of who God is, we see Jesus emptying himself of his status at the Father’s right hand in order for the love of God to flow through Him to mankind.
- ◆ And as Jesus’ ministry develops we will see him reveal more about the special relationship the Son has with the Father.
- ◆ From God’s point of view, the self-humiliation of the Son is the Trinity’s loving response to man’s downfall.
- ◆ Martin Luther puts it this way; “God reveals who God is in complete vulnerability by placing himself in the hands of humanity, in surrendering to suffering and death.”

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- ◆ Here is the sacrifice God was willing to make so He could draw near to us and in the process draw us near to Him.
- ◆ And just to reiterate once again, the Son is in complete harmony with the Father's intentions.
- ◆ ***John 5:30 I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me***
- ◆ All three persons of the Trinity are committed to their creation and will not allow anything to disrupt their plans.
- ◆ The Father has initiated the process, now we see the Son, our Creator, taking on the life of the created and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit implementing God's plan of redemption.

The task set before Jesus was formidable and one only God would be capable of fulfilling in order to restore the broken relationship between God and humanity.

- ◆ Out of pure love and at great cost, God was willing to become something He had never been in eternity, a human being, in order to reconcile and redeem a lost humanity.
- ◆ Each of the titles listed at the beginning carried with it a heavy responsibility and it all had to be accomplished in a hostile landscape under the influence of evil forces.
- ◆ Much of the commentary on Jesus' mission focuses on His sacrifice on our behalf, but as we will see from the following list this is only one aspect (although the major one) of His work.
 - To reveal the true nature of the Father, a Father who loves His creation and longs to live with them.
 - He has to confront and defeat the devil and the evil forces arrayed against God and humanity.
 - He has to assume our fallen human nature in order to wrestle it to the ground, defeat it and restore it to God's original intention.
 - He has to live a perfect life in order to be humanity's representative for His righteousness to be attributed to us.
 - He has to demonstrate the arrival of the new age, the Kingdom of God by healing the sick, calming the elements, casting out demons, raising the dead and forgiving sin.
 - He has to choose disciples for the embryonic formation of the church.
 - He has to establish through His teachings the ruling principles of the Kingdom of God and show salvation is obtained through grace, not through obedience to the law as that is an impossibility for human beings.
 - He has to be born "under the law" in order to redeem those "under the law."
 - He has to introduce the New Covenant that has real forgiving power as it is based on His sacrificed body and blood, not the body and blood of animals.
 - He, as the "predestined" one or the "elected" one has to willingly substitute himself in the place of guilty mankind to accept the wrath of God's just penalty against sin on the cross, so we could be adopted into the family of God.
 - And finally Jesus has to willingly cut Himself off from the true source of life and go to that god-forsaken place called hell and die the second death so we wouldn't have to.
- ◆ It is only after He has faithfully fulfilled all these aspects that the Father will resurrect Him and accept His total sacrifice on humanity's behalf.
- ◆ It is to these aspects that we now direct our attention.